

**Office Hours:**

M-W,TH-F: 8:00-

12:00 1:00 - 5:00

T: 9:00-12:00 1:00 -
5:00

- ▶Children with special needs
- ▶Child Welfare and Early Intervention Services
- ▶Communicable Disease Investigations
- ▶Head Lice
- ▶HIV/AIDS Testing and Counseling
- ▶HIV Case Management
- ▶Immunizations
- ▶Maternity Support
- ▶Pregnancy Testing
- ▶Pap Smears
- ▶Prenatal and Postpartum Home Visits
- ▶Sexually Transmitted Disease Clinic
- ▶Travel
- ▶Tuberculosis Information and Vaccines
- ▶Vital Records
- ▶Washington State Birth Certificates
- ▶Death Certificates

HEAD LICE(Pediculosis)**WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?****HOW CAN LICE OUTBREAKS BE PREVENTED?****HOW ARE HEAD LICE SPREAD?****WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO DO?**

Though there is a certain stigma attached to getting head lice, it is not as bad as it is not a sign of poor hygiene; it is not limited to certain racial or ethnic groups. have often been mis-associated with poverty.

SYMPTOMS**HOW DO I TREAT HAIR GET RID OF LICE?****CAUTION!****ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The truth is any human head is susceptible to lice if exposed through person to person contact. Head lice can occur at any age and to either sex . . . it could happen to you. So it is wise to learn how to recognize and treat head lice infestation and how to prevent infestation.

WHAT ARE HEAD LICE?

The head louse (plural lice) is a type of insect known as *Pediculus capitis*. They are brown or black in color. It has six claw-like legs, a pointed head and a flat, elongated wingless body.

The head louse is a parasite--meaning it needs a (person's) head for nourishment. They make their way to the scalp, lice begin to feed. They live by biting and sucking blood from the scalp. Their feeding causes itching. Lice can live up to 48 hours off the human head. Head lice do not jump or fly. They do crawl rather rapidly--up to 12 inches per minute.

Lice lay their eggs (nits) on the hair shaft usually less than half inch from the scalp. It takes about six days for the nits to hatch. Nits can survive up to 30 days off the human head. After the eggs hatch, the lice reach adulthood in seven to ten days. When fully mature, they multiply quickly. During their one month life cycle, females can lay between 150 and 300 eggs.

Nits are oval shaped and are strongly attached to the hair. Most often they can be found on the hair behind the ears or the nape of the neck.

Head lice are not a reportable public health problem, but researchers estimate approximately three million Americans are affected each year. Nearly all public health officials concur that this incidence is increasing.

With the exception of the common cold, head lice probably affect more children in the United States than any other parasitic infection.

02N-0058**SUP 1**

United States each year than all other communicable diseases combined.

Animals do not carry human head lice, so there is no need to treat family pet

Top of page.

SYMPTOMS

Persistent itching of the scalp and back of the neck is the most common symptom can lead to skin sores and infection.

You should look for nits attached to individual hairs. These can be seen with the r but you could probably identify them more easily with the aid of a magnifying glass and good lighting. Sometimes dandruff or droplets of hair spray can be confused with removing the specks from the hair shaft. Dandruff or hair spray will come off easily but nits are very difficult to remove.

Top of page.

HOW ARE HEAD LICE SPREAD?

Infestation with head lice is a problem unique to human (the insect does not live on animals) and is most common among school-age children. This is because children spend much time in close proximity to each other.

Since lice are so contagious, even the cleanest person can become infested by person-to-person contact with another person who has lice (most likely way), by wearing another person's hat or clothing, by using another person's comb, brush, or bedding, or by clothing worn by someone who has lice in a shared clothing storage compartment, locker, or cloak room.

Top of page.

HOW CAN LICE OUTBREAKS BE PREVENTED?

Check your children's hair **WEEKLY** for lice or nits and treat the hair right away if you find them.

Provide separate storage areas for clothing and other personal articles. Assign cubbies or areas for each child in school or child care settings. (Place personal articles in individual bags or sacks) . Assign sleeping mats and bedding to only one person and store these separately.

Teach all family members to **stop sharing personal items such as hair brushes, ribbons, barrettes, head bands, combs, etc., whether at home, school or work** if a child lives in two households, moving back and forth between parents and other relatives. Those households also need to be checked for lice and go through a complete cleaning as directed in section *"What Else Do I Need to do?"*.

Top of page.

HOW DO I TREAT HAIR TO GET RID OF LICE?

Once head lice are found, the problem should be taken care of quickly in order to prevent spreading to others. One such treatment to safely eliminate lice and their eggs is a lice crème rinse, Nix*, that can be purchased without a prescription from any drug store. It is one of the most effective of the available treatments.

- ▶ Wash the hair with a mild shampoo that contains **NO CONDITIONER**. A lice crème rinse taking care to keep it out of the eyes, nose and mouth. Let it remain on the hair for 10 minutes. If Nix gets in the eyes, flush it out with water immediately.
- ▶ Rinse the hair with water. After towel drying the head with a clean towel, dry the towel, put it in the laundry.
- ▶ Use a comb to divide the hair into four equal parts (quarters). Select one "quarter" to begin combing. Lift up a portion of the hair approximately one inch from the quarter selected.
- ▶ Starting at the top of the scalp, using a firm and even motion toward the ends of the strand, use your fingernails to remove the nits. A **LiceMeister™** brand comb is recommended to help remove lice and nits (to order, call toll-free 1-888-542-3634).
- ▶ Pin back each one inch portion of hair with a bobby pin or hair clip. Continue the procedure until the first "quarter" is completed. Do not drop the nits on the floor or put them in the garbage.
- ▶ Repeat the above procedure for the remaining three "quarters" until all of the hair has been picked and pinned.
- ▶ Remove all hair pins and thoroughly rinse the entire head of hair with water. Wash the hair pins until washed in hot soapy water.
- ▶ After hair has dried, recheck entire head for stray nits and remove any remaining. **Remember**, you may have to repeat this procedure more than once.
- ▶ **Examine all family members for the next three weeks.** If any live lice are found, repeat treatment. You may use Nix again after 7-10 days, but this is not usually necessary. The product, if directions are followed, is at least 95% effective in getting rid of the lice and its lice killing effects continue to work for up to 14 days.

Top of page.

CAUTION!

- ▶ **NEVER** mix Nix with other lice treatments.
- ▶ **DO NOT USE** any other crème rinse, shampoo containing crème rinse, hair mousses, gels, mayonnaise, nor vinegar on the hair for at least one week after using Nix because they may weaken the action of Nix.

- ▶ **Do not** use Nix on children who are less than two months old. (Pregnant and breastfeeding women should consult their health care provider before using)
- ▶ Chlorine in pool water may also deactivate Nix leading to some treatment failure
- ▶ **Never** use Nix on eyebrows and eyelashes. Lice may be removed from these by plucking them off with the hands or tweezers or by applying an ophthalmic petrolatum ointment twice daily for 8 to 10 days.
- ▶ **Never** use Nix more often than recommended as it is an insecticide and can be poisonous. Overuse of any lice medication may result in side effects such as dermatitis (skin inflammation/rash) and other medical problems.
- ▶ **Never** use dog or cat flea and tick spray on your child.

Top of page.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO DO?

Check other household members for lice. Treat other family members who have lice. Do not treat someone if you do not see lice or nits in their hair unless they are the infested bed-mate.

Notify your child's school and child care program if your child has lice.

Laundry all clothing (including coats, hats, scarves) and bedding used by the infested person in the 48 hours prior to the treatment. To launder these items, do **ANY** of the following:

- ▶ Wash the items at temperatures exceeding 130°F for at least 20 minutes.
- ▶ Dry in a hot dryer for at least 30 minutes.
- ▶ Dry clean the items that cannot stand high temperatures.
- ▶ Pack the items in a sealed plastic bag for a minimum of two weeks. (This is best for small items such as barrettes, headbands, ball caps, hair ribbons, headgear, transistor earphones, head phones, etc.)
- ▶ **Every day**, change beds and wash the bedding. Keep children in their own home.
- ▶ **Every day**, wash hair with regular shampoo and (most important) go through and remove any nits found. Wash all combs and brushes used by the person. They can be cleaned by washing them in hot soapy water (temperature greater than 128°F) for at least 10 minutes every day for a week.
- ▶ **Vacuum, vacuum, vacuum.** Vacuum upholstered furniture, pillow, carpets, helmets, sports helmets, and upholstered car seats every day for a week. Change vacuum cleaner bag after use.

- ▶ There is no evidence that lice sprays are necessary or effective. They may cause allergic reactions. The health department does not provide or recommend them.

Top of page.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Each school district and child care program sets their own head lice control policy. Please consult them if you have questions about their policy.

Top of page.

*Nix is a registered trademark of the Warner-Wellcome company.

[Health Home](#) | [Mason County Home](#) | [Directory](#) | [Map](#)



King County

Home

News

Services

Comments

Search

Communicable Disease Fact Sheet

HEAD LICE (Pediculosis)

- [What Are Head Lice?](#)
- [What Are the Symptoms?](#)
- [How Are Head Lice Spread?](#)
- [How Can Head Lice Outbreaks be Prevented?](#)
- [Steps for Eliminating Lice and Nits](#)
- [How Do I Comb Hair to Remove Lice and Nits?](#)
- [What Chemical-Free Treatments Are Recommended?](#)
- [About Chemical Treatment: Nix®](#)
- [What Else Do I Need to Do?](#)
- [What If the Lice Come Back or the Treatment Fails to Work?](#)
- [Additional Information](#)

What Are Head Lice?

- Lice are tiny insects that live on and crawl through the hair. They are gray, brown, or black and can be difficult to see.
- Lice need human blood to survive and will die within 24 hours if they can not find a "meal".
- Lice lay eggs (nits) on the hair close to the scalp. It takes about 6 days for the nits to hatch.
- Nits are easier to see than lice. Nits are oval shaped and most often can be seen in the hair behind the ears or near the neck.
- Head lice themselves are not a health hazard or a sign of uncleanliness, and are not responsible for the spread of any disease.

What Are the Symptoms?

- Itching of the scalp is the most common symptom. Scratching can lead to skin sores and skin infections.

How Are Head Lice Spread?

- Most often head lice are spread by head-to-head contact with another person who has lice.
- Lice can be spread by wearing another person's hat or clothing, by using another person's comb, brush, or bedding, or by placing clothing worn by someone who has lice in a shared clothing storage compartment, locker, or a



Public Health
Seattle & King County

Public Health
Homepage

Food Protection
Program

Drinking Water
Program

Communicable
Diseases

Sexually
Transmitted
Diseases

HIV/AIDS
Program

Birth and Death
Records

Press Release
Archives

Contact Us

cloak room.

- Pets do not carry human lice.

How Can Head Lice Outbreaks be Prevented?

- Check your children's hair weekly for lice or nits.
- Treat the hair right away if you find them.
- Do not share combs, brushes, towels, bedding, hats or clothing.
- Provide separate storage areas for each person's clothing and other personal articles. Put personal articles in individual bins or sacks.
- Avoid sharing clothing, costumes, and headgear/helmets. Use disposable shower caps or inexpensive liners when headgear/helmets must be worn by different children.
- Assign sleeping mats and bedding to only one person and store these separately.

Steps for Eliminating Lice and Nits

- Lice and nits are most effectively removed by using a combination of **combing** and **lice treatments**. There are chemical-based and chemical-free lice treatments available over the counter.

The most important step in successfully treating lice is thorough, careful combing of the hair for lice and nits at least daily for 21 days. It is important to use an effective lice comb for this step (see below).

How Do I Comb Hair to Remove Lice and Nits?

- Allow yourself enough time to do a good job. It may take as long as an hour if the hair is long and thick. Work in good light.
- Apply one of the lice treatments as described below.
- Be sure to use an effective, nit-removal comb such as Licemeister® or LiceOut®.
- Place a towel between the hair and shoulders of the person who has head lice.
- Part the hair into four sections and pin the hair with clips to prepare it for combing.
- Starting with one section, select a small area of the section that is about 1 inch square. Start at the scalp and pull the comb all the way through to the end of the strands of hair.
- If nits remain attached to the hair shaft, comb through the hair strands again.
- After each comb-through, dip the lice comb in hot water and wipe it with a paper towel.

- Continue combing until all sections are done.
- Wash the towel and clothes the person wore during the combing as described below.
- Wash the comb in extra-hot (128.3° F) soapy water for at least 10 minutes.
- Wash hands completely when done.

What Chemical-Free Treatments Are Recommended?

- Chemical-free treatments can be used as often as needed. They do not kill lice or nits. They slow down the lice and make it easier to comb them out.
- These treatments include coating the hair with one of the following:
 1. Water-based products such as LiceOut®; or HairClean 1-2-3®. Follow instructions on the box.
 2. Oil-based treatments such as olive oil or full-fat mayonnaise.
 - Apply thickly to hair.
 - Cover hair with disposable shower cap; leave in place for at least 30 minutes.
 - Follow instructions for lice and nit removal using an effective lice comb. Do not use these treatments at the same time the chemical treatment is used.

About Chemical Treatment: Nix®

- Although it is the most effective of the chemical treatments, it will not kill lice that have become resistant. It can be purchased without a prescription.
- Wash the hair with a mild shampoo that contains **NO CONDITIONER**, such as baby shampoo.
- Following the instructions on the box, apply Nix®.
- Comb the hair with a clean lice comb to remove the nits. Dry hair as usual.
- Repeat Nix® treatment in 7 days.
- **REMEMBER:** Since lice may be resistant to Nix® and other pesticides, you must perform daily nit combing for 21 days after using these products to assure complete removal of lice and nits.

CAUTION!

- Do not use Nix® when open sores are present.
- Do not use Nix® on children who are less than 2 months of age.

- Pregnant/breastfeeding women should consult their health care provider before using Nix®.
- Never mix Nix® with other lice treatments.
- **DO NOT USE** any other creme rinse, shampoo containing creme rinse, hair spray, mousses, gels, mayonnaise, or vinegar on the hair for at least 1 week **AFTER** using Nix®, because they may weaken the action of Nix®.
- Chlorine in pool water may also deactivate Nix® leading to some treatment failures.
- Never use Nix® on eyebrows and eyelashes. Apply petrolatum jelly for a few days and pluck off nits with fingers.
- Never use Nix® more often than recommended. It is an insecticide and can be poisonous if used improperly.

What Else Do I Need to Do?

- Check other household members for lice. Treat other family members who have lice. Do not treat someone if you do not see lice or nits in their hair.
- Notify your child's school and child care program if your child has lice.
- Wash all combs or brushes used by the person in extra-hot (128.3° F) soapy water for at least 10 minutes.
- Wash all clothing (including coats, hats, scarves) and bedding used by the infested person in the last 2 days prior to the treatment.

To wash these items, do **ONE** of the following:

1. Wash in extra-hot or heat dry the item at temperatures more than 128.3° F for at least 5 minutes.
 2. Dry clean the item.
 3. Pack non-washable items in a sealed plastic bag for 21 days to eliminate the risk from dormant nits.
- You may vacuum upholstered furniture, carpets, bicycle helmets, sports helmets, and upholstered car seats. Change the vacuum cleaner bag after use and place it in a sealed plastic bag and put the bag in the outside garbage.
 - Do not use lice sprays! They may cause toxic or allergic reactions.

What If the Lice Come Back or the Treatment Fails to Work?

- If lice come back, it is usually because nits or newly hatched lice were not removed with the first treatments.

- Follow the combing instructions as described.
- You may use the chemical free treatments as often as needed.
- You may use Nix® again after 7 days have passed since the last application of Nix®.
- No matter which treatment you use, the most important thing is to comb out the lice and nits completely.

Additional Information

- Please consult your school or child care program if you have questions about their head lice prevention and control policy.
- National Pediculosis Association: <http://www.headlice.org>

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice. For more information please call (206) 296-4600 (voice/TDD).

Updated: Monday, October 09, 2000 at 04:02 PM PDT

[Public Health Homepage](#) | [Safe Food](#) | [Safe Water](#)

[Communicable Disease](#) | [STD](#) | [HIV](#) | [Birth/Death Records](#)

[Public Health News](#) | [Contact](#)

[King County](#) | [Public Health](#) | [News](#) | [Services](#) | [Comments](#) | [Search](#)

Links to external sites do not constitute endorsements by King County.
By visiting this and other King County web pages,
you expressly agree to be bound by terms and conditions of the site.
[The details.](#)

M E M O R A N D U M

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE
FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION
CENTER FOR DRUG EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

DATE: 12-29-03

FROM: Director
Division of OTC Drug Products, HFD-560

SUBJECT: Material for Docket No. 2002N-0058

TO: Dockets Management Branch, HFA-305



The attached material should be placed on public display under the above referenced Docket No.



This material should be cross-referenced to Comment No. _____


Charles J. Ganley, M.D.

Attachment